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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGES

DELINQUENCIES AS EXPRESSED BY JUVENILE IN BORSTAL TRAINING INSTITUTE, GANMO, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING - HAMMED, Ayuba Olawale, OKESINA, Falilat Anike (PhD) and SALAWUDEEN, Azeez Omotosho	1
EFFECTS OF TRUANCY AS A DEVIANT BEHAVIOUR ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN LAGOS STATE: IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING - OSAKWE, Georgina Onukwube, UHUEGBU Stella Ihuoma	13
COUNSELLING SERVICE: A PANACEA FOR STUDENTS BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS - Bilhatu Kumah Dagari, Ph.D, Abdulwahab Salman Adisa, Ph.D	23
FACTORS HINDERING COUNSELLING SERVICES AMONG STUDENTS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT AS EXPRESSED BY GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA - Adebayo, D.O. Ajiboye, S.K., Fajonyomi, M.G.	29
MOTIVATION AND COMPETENCY AS CORRELATES OF EFFECTIVE COUNSELLING SERVICES IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA. - Tolu OGUNLEYE, Ph.D, Adetayo Joseph AFISANWO, Charity Uzuazo ONOFA	37
MOTIVATIONS FOR INVOLVEMENT IN EXAMINATION MALPRACTICES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN LAGOS STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING PRACTICE - Oniye, Abdulrazaq Olayinka Ph.D., Odebode, Aminat Adeola Ph.D., Bello, Sadiat Oluwakemi	47
ASSESSMENT OF THE NEED FOR, AWARENESS AND USE OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES BY STUDENTS IN AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA. NIGERIA - Dr S. A. Adisa, Ahmed Yusuf Jibrin	55
DEVIANT BEHAVIOURS AMONG YOUTHS: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING - Adomeh, I. O. C., Ojeli, I. A, Akpede, M. O., Okosodo J. O.	63

COUNSELLORS' REACTIONS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES IN LAGOS STATE SCHOOL SYSTEM - Abimie, B., Ikuburuju-Orola, A., Lawal, K.	73
PARENTING STYLES AS CORRELATE OF DEVIANT BEHAVIOURS AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ESAN-LAND OF EDO STATE - OBIYAN, Daniel Oseghale, EHIGBOR, Beatrice Omozele (Ph.D), OJUGO, Austin Itohan (Ph.D)	81
THE EFFECTS OF STRESS INNOCULATION AND PHYSICAL RELAXATION IN MANAGING OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG HEALTH WORKERS IN EKITI STATE, NIGERIA. - Dr. Olasupo E. Bamidele and Dr. Rosemary Saidu	89
EFFECTS OF DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOUR THERAPY AND SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING ON PSYCHO-SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN FROM SINGLE-PARENT HOMES IN IBADAN, NIGERIA - OSARENREN, Ngozi PhD, ODEWALE, Oluseyi PhD	97
COUNSELLORS' PERCEPTION OF CHALLENGES HINDERING EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING PROGRAMMES IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EDO STATE - OSUMAH, Obaze Agbonluae (Ph.D), OMI-UJUANBI, G. O. (Ph.D), AZELAMA, B. A.	105
SELF-ESTEEM AND LOCUS OF CONTROL AS DETERMINANTS OF SCHOOL COUNSELLORS' EFFICACY IN LAGOS METROPOLIS - Dr. Daodu. M.A., Dr. (Mrs). Elegbede, C.B, Dr. (Mrs). Adedotun, K.O	113
PSYCHOSOCIAL AND CULTURAL CORRELATES OF DROPOUT SYNDROME IN IMO AND ANAMBRA STATES, NIGERIA - Ngoladi, Ifebuzor Donatus	119

FACTORS HINDERING COUNSELLING SERVICES AMONG STUDENTS WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT AS EXPRESSED BY GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

One of the major responsibilities of professional counsellors is the provision of counselling service to every school child, irrespective of the physical challenges of such students. Studies have shown that students with hearing impairment in particular are faced with peculiar learning and social problems which require the attention of guidance counsellors. However, counsellors could encounter challenges in rendering adequate services to students with hearing impairment due to many factors. This study therefore investigated factors hindering counselling services among students with hearing impairment (H.I) as expressed by guidance counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey method was adopted where a total of two hundred and fifteen respondents were purposively selected to participate in the study. Questionnaire entitled "Factors Hindering Counselling Service Questionnaire (FHCSQ)" was employed to gather data. The instrument possessed a reliability coefficient of 0.74 after being subjected to a test-re-test method and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistical procedure. The measure of central tendency (mean) and t-test statistical tools were used to analyse and test the research question and the three null hypotheses. The results revealed that counsellor-related factors were the most significant factors hindering provision of counselling services to students with hearing impairment. There was also a significant difference in the expression of respondents on the basis of school type and ability to use sign language. It was therefore recommended that guidance counsellors should improve on their knowledge of the use of sign language and students with H.I. should acquire hearing aids and show willingness to benefit from counselling services.

Keywords: Hearing impaired, Counselling, Guidance counsellors, Hindrance, Expression.

Introduction

Since the emergence of counselling as a subset of guidance programme at the beginning of the 20th century in America, it has become an integral service in the modern society, particularly the school setting. This may not be unconnected with the fact that as far back as 1968, counselling was set up within the department of education by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Mikaye, 2012).

In Nigeria, the emergence of counselling dates back to 1959 when a group of Catholic Sisters at St. Theresa's College, Ibadan organized a formal guidance activity aimed at counselling students on career issues (Idowu, 2004; 2016). Subsequently, school counselling has therefore been introduced to assist students overcome different challenges they experience at home and at school. Thus, one of the major principles is that counselling is for everyone in the school regardless of physical defects or disabilities (Idowu, 2004; 2016). As much as professional school counsellors could be willing to key in to this golden principle, they may be limited to offer effective service to students with hearing impairment because of various hindrances.

Students with hearing impairment are found in the school setting with the aim not only to acquire academic training but also benefit from other services, particularly counselling, that the school provide for other students. Since students with hearing impairment have peculiar needs which bother on communication, the mandate of the school counsellor to provide services in this context becomes omnibus.

Hearing impairment is the inability to perceive sound through ears as a result of auditory malfunctioning. In the typical normal functioning the sound transmitted by the ossicles reaches the cochlear through vibrations pass via

the staples to the oval window down to a membrane covering an opening in the bony case of the cochlear and thereafter, into the fluid inside the cochlear (Bakare, 2013). Any form of defect in the process could amount to hearing impairment at different degrees, thereby putting the person with such condition in disadvantage. In most cases, students with hearing impairment find it difficult to adequately receive messages sent through sound and thus, having wrong perception of ideas unlike other students without hearing impairment.

Hearing impairment can be classified into five level in relation to the degree of the loss. These, according to Child Assessment Service (2008) are; mild, moderate, moderately-severe, severe and profound. Students with mild hearing impairment could find it difficult to identify such sounds such as whispering and other paralinguistic elements which are used by counsellors as pertainings of communication, particularly when trying to acknowledge what the client is expressing. Students with moderate hearing impairment are the category of hearing impaired persons that are unable to hear clearly what others are saying during conversations. This category of individual requires hearing aid in order to guarantee effective communication. Where the students with this condition could not afford or assess hearing aids, it becomes difficult for the counsellor to communicate with them especially when attempting to assist on the attendant academic, social and emotional problems relating to the child. Furthermore, students with moderately-severe hearing impairment are unable to clearly hear loud noises such as sound from vehicle horns, telephone ring or bell. This condition may limit the counsellor from providing efficient services to such a client particularly in the modern world where the use of technology such as telephone, is becoming more preferred. The counsellor may find it difficult adopting telephone conversation as a medium of providing follow-up services when the hearing impaired student could not be physically reached.

It is germane to equally consider other categorise of students with hearing impairment and how such could impede counselling services in the school setting. Students with severe hearing impairment unlike those with moderately-severe, can only hear very loud noises and sounds such as shouting. This condition may significantly hinder effective counselling since the need to shout during communication with such students could endanger confidentiality and privacy, which are key ethics of counselling profession. In another perspective, such need to shout may not be healthy for the counsellors themselves. The other category is the student with profound hearing impairment. This group of individuals have difficulty in perceiving any sound at all, hence they will be regarded as being totally deaf. This condition may create a more profound hindrance to effective counselling services in schools (be it special or mainstreamed schools) the major problem is that, the counsellor must have adequate knowledge and skills in sign language else it would be impossible for any communication to take place.

Students with hearing impairment require counselling because of the many peculiar problems which range from academic, social, emotional to health. This set of students experience educational gaps because their disability has to do with communication; the crux of learning. Their conditions limit them in expressing and receiving information in the school, particularly, classroom instructions. In addition, they may find it difficult to learn under the same environment like other students (typical persons) because of the effects of their hearing loss. According to Hall, Oyers and Hass (2011), environmental and background noises have been proved to have great effects on the hearing ability of students with mild hearing impairment. The Child Assessment Service (2008) identified some basic problems that students with hearing impairment usually encounter. These include delayed response to sounds, inability in locating the sound source, giving irrelevant answers or interpretation to instructions, requesting for repetition during conversation, making incorrect pronunciation, showing poor attention in class and getting easily irritated as a result of communication difficulty. It is imperative to infer that all these problems of students with hearing impairment suggest that they require effective counselling in order to be able to function and learn well in the school.

Counselling is the process of helping an individual to be more fully aware of himself and the ways in which he is responding to the stimuli in the environment. Idowu (2016) inferred that, in the school, counselling service is the

heart of the work of guidance counsellor because it is concerned with the feelings attitudes and emotional dispositions of an individual and the situation around him or her. Thus, counselling offers an opportunity where by the counsellor attempts to help student with hearing impairment understand themselves in the context of the present and future encounter for better adjustment. Since counselling is basically a function of communication between the counsellor and the client, it is imminent that guidance counsellor possesses the ability to express him or herself adequately and be able to understand the dimension at which students with hearing impairment express themselves. The inability to discharge such proficiency could significantly result to a setback in the process of rendering counselling services.

Statement of the Problem

Students with hearing impairment are the individual whose hearing threshold is not in the normal degree to receive sounds whereby high or low frequency sounds are selectively affected. The extent of hearing loss among students differs according to the severity and nature of impairment. This suggests that such students will encounter communication problems in relation to their academic and co-curricular activities. The study of Chan and Leung (2004) found that hearing impairment restricted opportunities for learning and social interaction among elementary students. The role of guidance counsellor in assisting students with hearing impairment cannot be overemphasized. Such assistance is built on effective communication between the counsellor and the concerned students. However, the effects of hearing impairment (H.I) on oral communication and language development of students coupled with other factors could to a large extent affect counselling relationship. Madell (2015) in a study carried out in Australia found that counselling among children with hearing loss was inhibited because of counsellors' low skills in the use of sign language and inability to understand clients' defective language. Also, Child Assessment Service (2008) earlier reported that the attitude of children with hearing loss hindered counselling services in schools in Hong Kong. In similar study, Ogungbade (2016) found that hearing impaired students in Nigeria exhibited aggressive behaviours which constituted barrier to effective learning and counselling.

Regardless of the level of disability, every child in the school is expected to benefit from the available facilities. Hence, students with hearing impairment are expected to equally benefit from the counsellors as much as possible, but it appears little attention has been expended on investigating what could impede such opportunity. This study therefore investigated factors hindering counselling services among students with hearing impairment as expressed by guidance counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Research Question

What are the factors hindering counselling services among students with hearing impairment as expressed by guidance counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the factors hindering counselling services among students with hearing impairment as expressed by guidance counsellors based on school type.
2. There is no significant difference in the factors hindering counselling services among students with hearing impairment as expressed by guidance counsellors based on ability to use sign language.
3. There is no significant difference in the factors hindering counselling services among students with hearing impairment as expressed by guidance counsellors based on gender.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine factors hindering counselling services among students with hearing impairment as expressed by guidance counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study aimed at advancing useful recommendations that could serve as solutions to the identified hindrances to counselling services among students with hearing impairment.

Methodology

The design adopted in this study was the descriptive survey method in which quantitative approach was considered. The researchers used questionnaire to collect the required data a sample of the population. The population for the study were all guidance counsellors in Kwara State. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 215 respondents across secondary schools in Kwara State. The selection was purposive because only the practicing counsellors participated in the study. A questionnaire entitled "Factors Hindering Counselling Services Questionnaire (FHCSQ)" was adopted. It had two sections (A & B); section B was subsectioned into three viz: counsellor-related factors; students-related factors and school-related factors. The instrument was patterned in Four-point Likert scale format on the continuum of 4 – 1 scoring. The instrument was subjected to the test- re-test method in order to establish its reliability. After subjecting the two sets of scores to the Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and the result yielded 0.82 coefficient, which was adequate. The researchers sought the informed consent of the respondents and only those that agreed to participate responded to the questionnaire. Thus, participation was voluntary. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The demographic data were analysed using percentage, while t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical tools were used to test the null hypotheses formulated. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results Demographic Data

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by School Type, Ability to use Sign Language and Gender.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
School Type		
Mainstream Schools	207	96.28
Special Schools	8	3.72
Total	215	100.00
Ability to Use Sign Language		
Yes	39	18.14
No	176	81.86
Total	215	100.00
Gender		
Male	171	79.54
Female	44	20.46
Total	215	100.00

The results in Table 1 revealed that 96.28% of the respondents were from mainstream schools while only 8 (3.72%) were from special schools. A total of 39 (18.14%) possessed the ability to use sign language, while 176 (81.86%) lacked the ability to use sign language. A total of 171 (79.54%) respondents were males, while 44 (20.46%) were females.

Research Question: What are the factors hindering counselling services among students with hearing impairment as expressed by guidance counsellors in Kwara State?

Table 2: Mean and Rank Order of Respondents' Expression

S/No	Counselling for students with H.I is hindered by:	Mean/Rank
Counsellor-Related Factors		
1	inadequate knowledge of the use of sign language	2.61
2	inability to communicate with students with H.I.	2.55
3	lack of interest in assisting students with H.I.	2.53
4	inability to access resources for communicating with students with H.I.	2.40
5	insufficient time to spend with students with H.I.	1.17
	Sub-Total	10.26 (1st)
Student-Related Factors		
6	lack of hearing aids	2.52
7	short attention span	2.50
8	aggressive behaviours	1.60
9	impatience to express themselves	1.31
10	unwillingness to attend counselling sessions	1.24
	Sub-Total	9.17 (2nd)
School-Related Factors		
11	insufficient counsellors with efficient skills in sign language	2.50
12	unavailability of special counselling laboratory for students with H.I.	2.47
13	lack of skill acquisition training for counsellors on the use of sign language	1.41
14	insufficient time in the school timetable for counselling programme	1.38
15	lack of enlightenment for students with H.I. on importance of counselling	1.25
	Sub-Total	9.01 (3rd)

The results in Table 2 revealed that counsellor related factors ranked 1st among the factors hindering counselling services among students with hearing impairment as expressed by guidance counsellors in Kwara State, Nigeria. Thus, that provides answer to the research question raised. In particular, those composite factors are; inadequate knowledge of the counsellors on the use of sign language, inability to communicate with students with H.I. and lack of interest to assist students with H.I. Nevertheless, student-related and school-related factors ranked 2nd and 3rd respectively.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the expression of guidance counsellors on factors hindering counselling services among students with hearing impairment based on school type.

Table 3: Results of t-test on the basis of school type.

School type	No	Mean	SD	df	Cal. Tval	Crit. Tval	P-val
Mainstream schools	207	46.37	7.41	213	2.01	1.96	0.000
Special schools	8	44.61	6.30				

*significant; $p < 0.05$

The results in the Table 3 revealed that the p. value (0.000) was less than the alpha level (0.05) thus the null hypothesis is rejected, therefore, there is significant difference in the expression of respondents on factors hindering counselling services to students with hearing impairment based on school type.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the expression of guidance counsellor in Kwara state on factors hindering counselling services to student with hearing impairment based on ability to use sign language.

Table 4: Results of the t-test on the basis of ability to use sign language.

Ability to use sign language	No	Mean	SD	df	Cal. TVal	Crit-T-val	P-VAL
YES	39	42.46	6.02	213	3.66	1.96	0.000
NO	76	47.81	5.11				

*Significant; $p < 0.05$

The results in Table 4 revealed that the p-value (0.000) was less than the alpha level 0.05 hence the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is significant difference in the expression of the respondents on factors hindering counselling services to students with hearing impairment based on ability to use sign language.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the expression of guidance counsellors in Kwara State on factors hindering counselling services among students with hearing impairment based on gender.

Table 5: Results of t-test on the basis of gender

Gender	No	Mean	S.D	df	Cal-t.val	Crit.t	p-val
Male	171	48.16	7.40	213	.76	1.96	0.11
Female	44	47.6	7.02				

The results in Table5 revealed that the p-value was (.11) was greater than 0.05 alpha level of significance), while the calculated t-value was .76 which was less than the critical t-value of 1.96; thus, this suggests that the null hypothesis was accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in the expression of the respondents based on gender.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that most significant factors hindering counselling services among students with hearing impairment is counsellor-related. These includes inadequate knowledge of the counsellors on the use of sign language, inability to communicate with hearing impairment, lack of interest in assisting students with hearing impairment and inability to access resources for communicating with students with hearing impairment. The findings of this study corroborate Madell (2015) who reported that counselling personnel could not adequately assist children with hearing loss because of low proficiency in the use of sign language and inability to understand the expression of children with hearing loss whose pronunciation has been impaired. The results of the current study is an indication that many guidance counsellors are not skilled in communicating with students with hearing impairment, which suggests that the realization of the goal of providing counselling for everyone in school in Nigeria would not be achieved.

Other factors that hinder counselling services among students with hearing impairment are student-related and school related. The study revealed that students lacked hearing aids, exhibited short attention span and impatience to express themselves. The Child Assessment Service (2008) has earlier reported similar findings in Hong Kong where the attitude of children with hearing loss constituted barrier to counselling services in the school. In addition,

the present study equally found that school- related factors also hinder counselling services as expressed by the respondents. Such factors include insufficient counsellor with efficient skills in sign language and unavailability of special counselling laboratory for students with learning impairment. Madell (2015) found similar situation among children with hearing loss in urban schools in Australia. The implication therefore is that guidance counsellors are limited in providing services to students with hearing impairment because of the hindrances found in the students.

Furthermore, the findings of this study revealed that there was significant difference in the expression of guidance counsellors on factors hindering counselling services among students with hearing impairment based on school type. The expression of respondents from mainstream schools differed from special schools. One may not be surprised because those in special education must have received special training and possessed skills on how to communicate with students with hearing impairment unlike their counterparts in mainstream schools. The findings here corroborate the earlier study of Madell (2015) where teachers and counsellors in special schools did not express difficulty in relating with children with hearing loss. There was significant difference in the expression of respondents on factors hindering counselling services among students with hearing impairment based on ability to use sign language. Earlier, Child Assessment Service (2008) and Madell (2015) have reported similar findings that counsellors with proficiency in sign language performed among children with hearing loss than those without skills on the other hand, the present study found no significant difference in the expression of respondents on the basis of gender. Okeke (2016) has earlier found similar result that parents were not significantly different in their attitude towards the education of the physically challenged school-age children based on gender.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study the following conclusion were drawn:

- The most significant factor hindering counselling services among students with hearing impairment are counsellor related factor, which include inadequate knowledge of the use of sign language.
- There was significant difference in the factors hindering counselling services among students with hearing impairment as expressed by guidance counsellors based on school type and ability to use sign language
- There was no significant difference in the factors hindering counselling services among students with hearing impairment based on gender.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are therefore made:

- Since it is evident that inability of counsellors to use sign language and to communicate with students with hearing impairment are significant factors hindering counselling services among students with hearing impairment, it is imperative that emphasis be placed on compulsory acquisition of skills in the use of sign language for all professional counsellors.
- There should be constant capacity building on the job training for practicing counsellors in schools on the use of sign language and how to communicate with students with hearing impairment.
- Students with hearing impairment should be assisted in getting hearing aids.
- Schools should employ more counsellors who have ability to communicate with students with hearing impairment.
- There should always be the forum or platform where counsellors could come together to learn the arts of sign language from each other and share ideas.

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